



The Municipal EcoLink

An e-bulletin from the NH Department of Environmental Services

July 2021

The Municipal EcoLink is a monthly e-bulletin designed to inform you of the latest environmental ideas, trends, grants, rules and more from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). We respectfully request that the following is electronically distributed or otherwise made available to your municipal committees, councils and boards. Please feel free to post it on your municipal website as well. You may read past issues at [The Municipal EcoLink](#).

Drought Update

While southern New Hampshire had its wettest July on record and drought and abnormally dry conditions have receded north, that does not necessarily mean groundwater levels are recovering to normal levels. The majority of rain received during the growing season goes to vegetation and evaporation or in the case of heavy storms, runs off. Significant recharge of groundwater doesn't occur until the fall. So how low are groundwater levels? Between the end of May and June, in general levels were below average and dropping across the state. Has the rain this month helped at all? NHDES staff will answer that question after finishing up monthly monitoring of its 31 well sites. Stay tuned for the results in next week's [NHDES Drought Update](#) and July's [NH Groundwater Level Monitoring Report](#).

Low-Income Residential Drought Assistance Program (DAP)

The Low-Income Residential Drought Assistance Program is a financial assistance program available to qualifying New Hampshire homeowners affected by drought to help restore reliable water to their homes. The program will continue to be available, however, sunset dates for applications will be roughly four weeks from when the drought is declared over for each individual county. For more information, see the [Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund website](#).

2021 Annual Drinking Water Construction Project Assistance Program Update

Reminder to community water system owners, operators and managers that the deadline for the **2021 Annual Drinking Water Construction Projects Assistance Program is September 9**. The annual program is focused on loan and/or grant funding assistance for drinking water system improvement projects. The [2021 Award Plan](#) outlines the program eligibility and application requirements. Applications will be accepted through midnight on September 9; electronic submittal preferred through the [online forms](#). For up-to-date information, subscribe for email alerts through the [Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund website](#).

2022 Local Source Water Protection Grant Applications Now Available

Local Source Water Protection Grant applications are available now and due November 1, 2021. Applicants can now be awarded up to \$25,000 for projects protecting drinking water sources or up to \$30,000 for projects that address climate change. For the Grant Application and Information Packet and more details, please visit the [Drinking Water Source Protection Program webpage](#). If you have any questions or would like to discuss your grant project idea, feel free to contact Bess Morrison at bess.morrison@des.nh.gov or call [\(603\) 271-2950](tel:603-271-2950).

Water Infrastructure Funding Programs

The NHDES Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund (DWSRF) and Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) programs will hold public hearings on the Fiscal Year 2021 Draft Intended Use Plans (IUP) and Project Priority Lists (PPL). In addition, the Wastewater State Aid Grant Program for Water Pollution Control will hold a public hearing on the project priority lists for Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023 and for the ensuing years. The hearings will be held virtually via GoToWebinar on Thursday, August 5. Participants may join by computer or phone: [Registration link](#). For more information, please see the [Public Hearing Notice](#).

2019-2020 NH Coastal Flood Risk Summary – Training Videos

The NHDES Coastal Program, in partnership with UNH Extension and NH Sea Grant, has released two short videos summarizing the [2019-2020 NH Coastal Flood Risk Summary](#). The [first video](#) summarizes key findings from the [Part I: Science](#) report, which provides an overview of best available science related to coastal flooding in New Hampshire and includes updated projections of sea-level rise, coastal storms, groundwater rise, extreme precipitation and freshwater flooding. The [second video](#) summarizes the [Part II: Guidance for Using Scientific Projections](#) report, which provides guiding principles and a seven-step process for incorporating the latest coastal flood risk projections into planning, regulatory, and site-specific projects and decisions. Both videos are available on the [NHDES YouTube Channel](#) and were funded, in part, by NOAA's Office for Coastal Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act in conjunction with the NHDES Coastal Program.

Consider Necessary State Approvals During Building Permitting Process

Before issuing municipal or local building permits, please note that property owners must also ensure that they have the proper septic system permits in order to utilize their properties as intended. It is a common problem for buyers of properties to learn – after they've received all of the municipal approvals they need – that their property lacks applicable state approvals and their business plan is no longer achievable. One very common example is when food service establishments are purchased, with the new owner developing a business plan based on the existing number of seats. In order to get a food service license, the owner must have proof of an operationally approved septic system, as applicable, for the existing or proposed use. Many times it is at this point that the buyer realizes they can no longer go forward with their business plan. Approvals from other programs within NHDES including, but not limited to, Wetlands, Shoreland, Alteration of Terrain and Drinking Water, may also be necessary for existing uses or proposed development. It is therefore imperative that, before the issuance of any municipal or local building permits for new structures or the expansion of use of existing structures, the applicant submit verification that all applicable state permits and approvals have been obtained. For more information, see our [Got Permits? poster](#), visit our [Wetlands](#) or [Septic Systems](#) webpages, or call [\(603\) 271-2147](#) and ask to speak with someone within the applicable program.

Water Works Operator Certification Exams

[Drinking Water Operator Certification Examinations](#) will be held on October 5, 2021, at NHDES, 29 Hazen Drive, Concord. Applications for the exam are due 30 days prior to the examination. There is also an option to take a computer-based exam for Grades I-IV at various locations throughout the state at any time. For more about Water Works Operator Certification, see the [certification webpage](#).

New Dock Registration Rules

New Dock Registration rules have been adopted as interim rules with an effective date of June 15, 2021. The rules create a streamlined registration process for owners of legally existing docking structures in non-tidal waters. More detailed information about the adopted interim rules can be found in the following two fact sheets: [New Voluntary Non-Tidal Docking Structures Registration Process \(WB-28\)](#) and [Permitting for Private, Non-Commercial Freshwater Docking Structures \(WB-19\)](#). You can also [watch a video](#) explaining a new electronic submission process that was rolled out in conjunction with the new rules.

NH RSA 154:8-b Limiting Use of Class B Fluorine-Containing Firefighting Foams

During the 2019 legislative season, the NH Legislature adopted Senate Bill 257 relative to PFAS in firefighting foam and firefighter protective clothing. NH RSA 154:8-b includes requirements designed to reduce environmental contamination and to reduce the risk of public health impacts for firefighters and New Hampshire citizens. NH RSA 154:8-b prohibits foams containing PFAS for use in testing or training on or after January 1, 2020. NH RSA 154:8-b also bans manufacturers of Class B foams containing PFAS from knowingly selling or distributing these foams in the state unless otherwise specifically exempt. Refer to the jointly issued [Technical Bulletin](#) by the state Department of Safety and NHDES that includes Frequently Asked Questions. If Class B firefighting foam containing PFAS is discharged, NH RSA 154:8-b requires the municipality of the fire department to notify NHDES within 48 hours of making the discharge. To report a discharge of Class B foams containing PFAS, contact Amy Doherty of the Waste Management Division, Hazardous Waste Remediation Bureau at [\(603\) 271-6542](#) or amy.doherty@des.nh.gov.

Watershed Assistance Section 319 Grant

NHDES' Watershed Assistance Section has released the 2022 Watershed Assistance Grants' Pre-proposal request for proposals (RFP) to support local initiatives to restore impaired waters or protect high quality waters through the implementation of watershed-based plans. These plans must have a clear water quality goal and include the nine, minimum elements (a) through (i) required by the U.S. EPA. Pre-proposals are due by 4 PM, September 17, 2021. For more information and to access the application form, visit the [Watershed Assistance Grants](#) webpage.

Water Quality Planning 604(b) Grant

Solicitation for regional planning commission projects that will use planning dollars to address nonpoint source (NPS) pollution or other water quality concerns. These grants are available to Regional Planning Commissions and/or the Connecticut River Joint Commissions for water quality planning purposes. The 2022 Request for Letter of Intent (LOI) is now available. An approximate total award amount of \$64,000 is available. All LOIs are due by 4 PM on September 17, 2021. For more information and to access the application form, visit the [Watershed Assistance Grants](#) webpage.

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